

80312

September 18, 1980

BISHOP RIVERA RESIGNS AS PROVINCE VIII
PRESIDENT AT CLOSE OF OUTSTANDING SYNOD

by Ruth Nicastro

The Episcopal Times

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. -- After bringing down the final gavel Sept. 6 on what was acclaimed by delegates as "the best synod in memory," the Rt. Rev. Victor Rivera, Bishop of San Joaquin, announced his resignation as president of the Episcopal Church's Province VIII, a post he has held for the past four years. The province's vice president, Bishop Robert Cochrane of the Diocese of Olympia, will succeed to Bishop Rivera's unfulfilled term -- scheduled to run until 1982 -- at the end of this year.

The announcement came at the end of Bishop Rivera's address during the synod's closing Eucharist. The bishop referred to the province's long struggle to establish its own identity within the context of the Church as a whole and to the need for changes to give the provincial system more "authority and credibility." The bishop also challenged his fellow bishops to more active participation in the synod and to more active cooperation with "a very forward looking Program Council."

The 55th Synod of the Province of the Pacific not only had acclaimed and celebrated that unique identity of which the bishop spoke, with all its particular opportunities for ministry and mission, but also offered a model of what a province -- and a synod -- could and should be.

Minimizing legislative sessions, the Agenda Committee had chosen to emphasize program at this synod, concentrating upon certain models which present particular challenges to the western dioceses in the 80s and which have embodied the sharing concept in education, evangelism and ministry.

The Rev. Canon Oliver B. Garver, Jr., Executive Assistant to the Bishop of Los Angeles, was keynoter for the meetings which had the theme of "Breaking Out of the Cultural Cocoon: the Wasp and the Butterfly."

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

Enumerating "six essential building blocks in the erection of a strong and sturdy Household of Faith" -- stewardship, evangelism, communication, education, lay ministry, and clergy recruitment/training/deployment -- Garver called the province leaders to a fresh consideration of those blocks in the context of new realities in the West -- "radically new demographics, youth who do not know Christ, media religion as a major new force, the frightening social views of the electronic church, the grave and advancing illness of urban America, and the challenge to evangelize and minister in rural America."

Garver introduced five models of ministry which have broken out of typical molds to fulfill special needs within the province.

Bishop Frederick Putnam of the new Area Mission of Navajoland emphasized the importance of effective lay ministers in that vast and sparsely populated jurisdiction. Navajoland has 12 congregations and serves 5,000 people spread over more than 30,000 square miles. His clergy contingent of two deacons and five priests is supplemented by five full-time lay pastors, all women, who carry on both the pastoral and social concerns work of the mission.

Virginia Ram spoke not in her capacity as a member of the national Executive Council of the Church, but as Program Director of the Church of the Epiphany in East Los Angeles, which for the past 20 years, she noted, has reached out to minister with the Hispanic people of the barrio.

The Rev. M. Fletcher Davis described the work of St. Anselm's Refugee Center in Garden Grove, Calif., where he and his staff and the Parish of St. Anselm are engaged in "building hope for new life" among the thousands of Indochinese refugees in Orange County.

The importance of Asian ministries in the Province of the Pacific was highlighted by two models. St. Nicholas Korean Mission in Hollywood, under the leadership of the Rev. Matthew Ahn, is building a fast-growing congregation (31 adults were confirmed this year) in quarters shared with them by their primarily Anglo hosts of St. Stephen's Parish. An accompanying Community Center, begun with a United Thank Offering grant of \$1,300 three years ago, now operates on an annual budget of more than \$300,000, offering essential services to new Korean immigrants.

In Seattle, the Rev. Timothy Nakayama's primarily Japanese-speaking congregation of St. Peter's began reaching out to other Asians with the adoption of its first Indochinese refugee family five years ago. In 1977 they began a Chinese ministry, the

first in Seattle, which grew quickly into a mission church co-sponsored by St. Peter's and the Diocese of Olympia. The two congregations then reached out to ethnic Chinese refugees from Vietnam, sponsoring some 50 families. Eighty percent of the Chinese congregation is now made up of such refugees. St. Peter's this year sent one of its Japanese-speaking members to Africa to carry its sense of mission still further.

Addressing the synod on Friday evening, Presiding Bishop John M. Allin praised the ministries which had been highlighted and pointed to the richness of the opportunities offered the Church in the diversity of the people to whom it is called to minister.

"God is trying to give us all a vision of how it's meant to be," Allin said, "each part contributing its thing, not in conformity but infinite in diversity. God hasn't called us to organize his creation, but to participate in it -- to help each person make his or her acceptable offering, to share life, to proclaim the Good News in deed as well as in word."

Presentations of the models, with responses from Allin, Garver and the delegates, occupied most of the two and a half days of the synod. Interspersed, however, were some moments of more typically legislative action which were not without their own drama.

In a new document designed to bring the province's Ordinances in line with national Canons, which leave to each diocese the makeup of its delegation to a synod, the Committee on Constitution and Ordinances had proposed eliminating the requirement that each diocese's representation should be made up of its eight deputies to General Convention plus two of its delegates to the Triennial Meeting of the Women of the Episcopal Church.

Substitute language dropped the deputy requirement and eliminated the vote of the two churchwomen delegates, permitting them to be seated with voice only.

Delegates to the provincial churchwomen meeting, which was held immediately prior to the opening of the synod, did not learn of this change until their arrival. Sensitive to the women's complaint that they should have had time to discuss the proposed change with their constituents, the committee introduced substitute wording which would have restored their vote as regular delegates to the synod. In floor debate which followed, the intent of the substituted section was lost in the shuffle of amendment upon amendment, with the result that the women lost both voice and vote.

Supporters of the change reckoned without the political expertise of the churchwomen's national Presiding Officer Betty Connelly, who resides in the province and was a delegate to the provincial churchwomen's meeting from the Diocese of Los Angeles. After a brief report by Mrs. Connelly on the work of the churchwomen, and some quiet behind-the-scenes maneuvering, a resolution was passed next morning to postpone implementing the

